UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/24859
27 November 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 24 NOVEMBER 1992 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I should like to report to the Security Council on recent events relating to the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM).

In the days immediately prior to the arrival in Mogadishu of my new Special Representative, Mr. Kittani, there were a number of disturbing developments. On 28 October, General Aidid:

(a) Declared that the Pakistani battalion, which had been carrying out peace-keeping patrols, would no longer be tolerated in the streets of Mogadishu;

(b) Ordered the expulsion within 48 hours of the UNOSOM Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance, Mr. Bassiouni, on the grounds that his activities went counter to the interests of the Somali people and his security could no longer be guaranteed;

(c) Warned that any forcible UNOSOM deployment would be met by violence and that the deployment of United Nations troops in Kismayo and Berbera was no longer acceptable.

At the request of the UNOSOM Force Commander, General Shaheen, Mr. Bassiouni's expulsion order was extended by seven days. However, subsequent efforts to have the decision rescinded were unsuccessful, and Mr. Bassiouni is now on a mission assignment in Nairobi.

Another disturbing trend, which has evolved in recent weeks, apparently at the instigation of local faction leaders, is the widespread perception among Somalis that the United Nations has decided to abandon its policy of cooperation and is planning to "invade" the country.

In an effort to dispel these misperceptions, I authorized my Spokesman to issue the following statement on 2 November:

"The appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia is meant to reaffirm the determination of the United Nations to help the people of Somalia in overcoming the tragic difficulties that their country faces. It is the occasion for renewed cooperation and partnership between Somalia and the international community. Its object is to save lives, defeat the spectre of famine and civil strife and pave the way to political reconciliation.

"In undertaking this task, the United Nations can only succeed with the consent and support of the Somali people. The purposes and methods of the United Nations under Mr. Kittani's leadership will remain unchanged as set forth by the Security Council. The Secretary-General has no doubt that Mr. Kittani will have the full cooperation of his Somali partners in this endeavour."

Nevertheless, apprehensions over the alleged intention of the United Nations to resort to forcible action in Somalia have persisted. As a consequence of this "invasion syndrome", there are reports that General Aidid may have made some tentative moves towards a rapprochement with Mr. Ali Mahdi against the "common enemy", i.e., the United Nations.

On 6 November, two patrol vehicles driven by unarmed UNOSOM military observers along the demarcation line in Mogadishu were hijacked by armed elements. The military observers were robbed of all their possessions. UNOSOM obtained information that the vehicles had been taken to the area controlled by Mr. Ali Mahdi (Mogadishu North). However, the latter has denied responsibility for the incident.

On 8 November, Mr. Kittani arrived in Mogadishu, where he immediately paid courtesy calls on Mr. Ali Mahdi and General Aidid. While assuring them that UNOSOM's mandate of peace and cooperation, as laid down by the Security Council, remained unchanged, Mr. Kittani pointed out that the international community was growing impatient over the obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. He stressed that it was incumbent on the Somalis themselves to bring about an improvement of conditions on the ground so as to facilitate the delivery of aid.

On 10 November 1992, the Pakistani battalion took control of the airport for the first time pursuant to an arrangement negotiated between UNOSOM and the airport security officials. The arrangement called for the deployment of 150 Pakistani troops at the airport terminal. In addition, 200 Somali guards, controlled and uniformed by UNOSOM, were to be deployed around the airport periphery.

On 12 November, General Aidid demanded the withdrawal of United Nations troops from the airport on the grounds that the Somali officials who had negotiated arrangements for the United Nations deployment had no authority to do so. A new agreement would have to be negotiated. If the United Nations troops were not withdrawn, he said, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would have to bear responsibility for the consequences.

Mr. Kittani recalled that the letter of agreement signed by Ambassador Sahnoun on 12 August called for UNOSOM to provide security for humanitarian personnel, equipment and supplies at Mogadishu port and airport and did not require any supplementary agreement to be made in that regard. On my instructions, he told General Aidid that the United Nations troops would not be withdrawn and that General Aidid would be held accountable for any action that he might initiate to displace them.

On 13 November, the airport came under heavy machine-gun, recoilless rifle and mortar fire. The Pakistani troops were compelled to return fire. They did not sustain casualties in this encounter and have remained in control of the airport.

During this period, Mr. Ali Mahdi prohibited in-bound ships from docking at the port of Mogadishu on the grounds that the cargoes were being diverted for the benefit of General Aidid's faction. For several days, a number of ships carrying humanitarian supplies were unable to dock and accumulated vast demurrage charges. Mr. Ali Mahid warned that any ship attempting to move into the port would be shelled unless all his demands were met, including a demand that UNOSOM take over full control of the port. On 23 November, after intensive persuasive efforts by my Special Representative, Mr. Ali Mahdi agreed to the resumption of operations at the port. Nevertheless, on 24 November, a World Food Programme ship carrying humanitarian supplies was shelled and its bridge set on fire as it attempted to enter the port.

On 16 November, I received from my Special Representative an assessment of his first week in Somalia, in which he highlights factors that until now have inhibited the distribution of food and other humanitarian assistance, particularly in areas outside Mogadishu. One of his principal concerns, like that of Ambassador Sahnoun before him, is that, in the absence of a government or governing authority capable of maintaining law and order, Somali "authorities" at all levels of society compete for anything of value in the country. Armed threats and killings often decide the outcome. Looting and banditry are rife. Amidst this chaos, the international aid provided by the United Nations and voluntary agencies has become a major (and in some areas the only) source of income and as such is the target of all the "authorities", who may sometimes be no more than two or three bandits with guns. In essence, humanitarian supplies have become the basis of an otherwise non-existent Somali economy.

At the same time, large sums of cash are extorted from donor agencies and organizations to allow them to operate. For example, agencies are compelled to pay for "protection", in particular for Somali escorts of their personnel and convoys. Additional sums of money, which can only be described as bribes, must also be paid at the airport and port and at every roadblock and checkpoint in order to transport supplies across the innumerable lines that divide the country.

Relief organizations also experienced increased hijacking of vehicles, looting of relief convoys and warehouses and detention of expatriate

personnel. In the south-west, as a result of confrontation between the supporters of General Aidid and those of former President Siad Barré, delivery of humanitarian aid in the Baidoa/Bardera region has become exceedingly difficult, resulting in large-scale starvation.

The net result is that, while massive amounts of relief supplies have been readied in the pipeline for the implementation of the 100-day action programme, the humanitarian assistance that reaches its intended beneficiaries is often barely more than a trickle. Unless the problems relating to security and protection of relief are effectively addressed, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will not be able to provide the relief assistance urgently in the amounts needed now in Somalia.

As a follow-up to the meeting on humanitarian assistance for Somalia, which was held in Geneva on 12 and 13 October, I have asked my Special Representative, Mr. Kittani, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Eliasson, to co-chair a technical meeting in Addis Ababa from 3 to 5 December with the participation of Governments, United Nations agencies and NGOs as well as the Somali political movements, clan elders and local voluntary organizations. This meeting will provide an important opportunity for the international community, together with the Somalis, to put into place arrangements for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout Somalia. The meeting will also initiate the process of rebuilding a civil society, including the generation of alternative sources of livelihood for Somalis besides the United Nations relief operations.

In the meantime, the cycle of extortion and blackmail described above must be broken and security conditions established that will permit the distribution of relief supplies. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the deployment in Somalia of the four additional UNOSOM battalions be achieved as quickly as possible.

In this connection, I should like to inform the Council that the consent of Somali authorities has been secured only for deployment of the Canadian battalion at Bossasso. The Canadian advance party (150 all ranks) is expected to arrive around 4 to 6 December and the remainder of the battalion by late December.

Despite the intensive efforts of my Special Representative, it has not proved possible to secure Somali consent for deployment in other parts of the country, especially Kismayo and Berbera where agreement seemed to be within reach a short time ago.

I wish on this occasion to pay a heartfelt tribute to the staff of UNOSOM and United Nations agencies, as well as to NGOs, for their devoted efforts to save lives and mitigate suffering.

However, I cannot conceal from the Security Council that the situation is not improving and the conditions that have developed in Somalia since the fall of the previous regime make it exceedingly difficult for the United Nations

operation to achieve the objectives approved by the Security Council. I am giving urgent consideration to this state of affairs and do not exclude the possibility that it may become necessary to review the basic premises and principles of the United Nations effort in Somalia.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI